

Study Guide
My Brothers and Me

A one-man multi-character drama about moments in the everyday walks of life of the African American male.



act1sing2@knology.net
(334) 315-5618

Artistic Genre: Theatre

Performing Artist: Ron McCall

Alabama Touring Artist Program

presented by the Alabama State Council on the Arts

This Study Guide has been prepared for you by the Alabama State Council on the Arts in collaboration with the performing artist. All vocabulary that is arts related is taken directly from the Alabama Course of Study, Arts Education. With an understanding that each teacher is limited to the amount of time that may be delegated to new ideas and subjects, this guide is both brief and designed in a way that we hope supports your school curriculum. We welcome feedback and questions, and will offer additional consulting on possible curriculum connections and unit designs should you desire this support. Please feel free to request further assistance and offer your questions and feedback. Hearing from educators helps to improve our programs for other schools and educators in the future.

Please Contact:

Diana F. Green, Arts in Education Program Manager at:
334/242-4076 Ext. 241
diana.green@arts.alabama.gov

Set up:

Artists typically arrive 60 minutes before their scheduled performance in order to set up. Please have the space available to the artist as soon as he arrives.

All artists will need some kind of setup prior to arrival. Please communicate with the artist to discuss needs. Before arrival, please make sure floors are clean, and any electrical hook ups are in place for the artist. If he has asked to use your amplification system, please have it ready for a sound test as soon as the artist arrives. Please provide a staff person to assist the artist with set up.

Role of the Audience:

Although many students may not choose to pursue professional careers in the arts, many will choose to remain lifelong participants in, and learners of, the arts. A role that all students may play is that of an appreciative, responsive audience member. This role is one that has lifelong value to the learner as well as to the performer. Learning appropriate audience behavior is an integral component of all of the arts education areas. Positive audience qualities are part of the overall goal of *Achieving Excellence Through Arts Literacy*.

- Alabama Course of Study: Arts Education; 2006

Role of the Audience (continued):

Appropriate audience behavior includes sitting still and being very quiet during the performance. Audiences clap at the end of particular sections of the performance, or when they see something amazing that they want to tell the performer they really like. If a performer takes a bow, that is always a time to clap. You should not clap to music unless the performer asks you to. It is never appropriate to talk during a performance, unless in this instance the artist asks a question. We ask teachers and students to practice these rules of performance etiquette during the Alabama Touring Program productions.

What to expect:

My Brothers and Me is a monologue performance lasting approximately 45 minutes. Mr. McCall is the only actor, but he portrays many characters. It will be important for students to pay attention to decide when each character changes. Students are asked to remain quiet and attentive. Dialogue is important in order to understand the message of the performance. Once the performance is over there will be a 15- 20 minute talkback with the actor. Students will be asked to raise their hands and speak loudly so that everyone will hear them. This is a good time to ask questions about the play.

Historical Background:

This production is a unique compilation of verse, poetry and prose quilted together by “Old Man Cephus McQueen’s” stories of his fictional yet truth based brothers. This one-man multi-character drama speaks to the reality of those life defining moments found in the everyday walks of life of the African American male.



The Writers



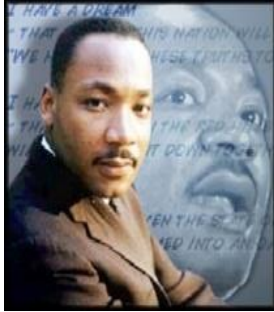
Paul Laurence Dunbar (June 27, 1872 – February 9, 1906) was an [African American poet](#), novelist, and playwright of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Much of his popular work in his lifetime used a [Negro dialect](#), which helped him become one of the first nationally-accepted African American writers. Much of his writing, however, does not use dialect; these more traditional



James Mercer Langston Hughes (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form [jazz poetry](#). Hughes is best known for his work during the [Harlem Renaissance](#). He famously wrote about the period that "Harlem was in vogue."^l



Oscar Brown, Jr (October 10, 1926 – May 29, 2005) was an American singer, songwriter, playwright, poet, [civil rights activist](#), and actor.



Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was an American [clergyman](#), activist, and prominent leader in the [African-American Civil Rights Movement](#).^[1] He is best known for his role in the advancement of [civil rights](#) in the United States and around the world, using [nonviolent](#) methods following the teachings of [Mahatma Gandhi](#).^[2] King has become a national icon in the history of [modern American liberalism](#).^[3]



Julius Lester (born January 27, 1939) is an [American](#) author of [books for children](#) and adults,^[1] and taught for 32 years (1971–2003) at the [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#). He is also a photographer, as well as a musician who recorded two albums of [folk music](#) and original songs.



Reverend Carlton Leake (born February 16, 1964) is a native of Memphis, TN. He has written the musicals such as *When Music Was Music I & II* and *Venus of Broadway*. He has also written the book, music and lyrics of several theatrical musicals. In 2000, he was the Guest Composer for the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. He currently serves as the musical director for the Ensemble Theatre in Houston, TX

SELECTIONS:

THE PARTY

LEST WE FORGET

WILL V-DAY BE ME DAY

WHAT VALOR

LAURA LEE

THE CHILDREN OF CHILDREN

TO BE A SLAVE

I'VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP



Vocabulary...

COMPILATION - the act of compiling: the compilation of previously documented works

POETRY- the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts.

PROSE- the ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse

VERSE- a succession of metrical feet written, printed, or orally composed as one of the lines of a poem



DRAMA- a composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue or pantomime a story involving conflict or contrast of character, especially one intended to be acted on the stage or dramatic storytelling.

MONOLOGUE- a long speech or soliloquy performed by one person

CHARACTERIZE-to describe, to indicate details or traits of someone or something

COMPILE-to put together (documents, selections, of the materials) in a book or work for example the compilation of ***My Brothers and Me***

IMPROV (Improvisation) - to compose and perform or deliver without previous preparation

INTEGRATE - to combined into one unit, to merge

SEGREGATE-to separate or set apart from others

Things You Should Know:



SEVEN SENSES OF DRAMATIC STORYTELLING

The seven senses can be incorporated into stories no matter the medium. They give depth and engage the audience on an experiential level.

1. **FACT** - Facts are absolute, not subjective or changeable.
Ex. $2 - 2 = 0$and $2+2 = 4$
2. **TRUTH** - Is subjective, changeable, and based on the perceptions of individual or collective. Truth is disputable
3. **LANGUAGE** - Each character has his/her own way of speaking (or not) and should be distinguishable from all other characters based upon personality, age, education, ethnicity, environment, social status, class distinction, nationality, affectations, health, etc.
4. **THE SENSES** - All of the senses should be involved in creating stage reality—hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, seeing—bringing all to life.
5. **ACTION** - A character is defined by what he or she does. There must be constant action that progresses the story and personality of the character. Characters have arcs. They begin in one place and end in another - one that is either improved or diminished.
6. **INTUITION** - Use of intuition allows the artists to take chances and go where the story or character leads. Try not to censor until you know that the branching off won't work---allow for spontaneity and the subconscious and super-conscious mind to take over sometimes---it can garner great and powerful surprises.
7. **SELF** - Use yourself, your experiences, your knowledge, wisdom and “issues” to fuel the work as author or actor. Much healing takes place through the arts for the artist and audience when allowed.

Websites You May Visit:

www.poetry4kids.com
www.poetryfoundation.org/
www.monologuearchive.com/children.html
www.monologues4kids.com
www.poets.org/lhugh/
www.poets.org/pldun/
www.thekingcenter.org/

Suggested Activities to do before the performance:

Allow the students to visit the websites listed and research monologues, poetry, and the writers listed in this production.

Explore the words integration and segregation. Explain to the students the significance of each word and their historical importance in American history.

Explain the Seven Senses of Dramatic Storytelling (listed above): These seven senses can be incorporated into stories no matter the medium and they give depth and engage the audience on an experiential level.

Suggested activities to do after the performance:

Revisit several of the civil rights issues talked about in the production.

Ask the class to determine which stories resembled expository, descriptive or informative.

Have the class to write about the production using either expository, descriptive or informative styles of writing.

Allow the students to visit the websites on monologues and choose one to perform (memorized) using the seven senses of dramatic storytelling.

Reflective Questions to explore with students:

- What is the significance behind the title of the performance “*My Brothers and Me*?”
- Why did Mr. McCall choose these particular characters to tell the story of *My Brothers and Me*?
- What do you think is the main theme of this production? Can you list details to support your conclusion?
- Which of the seven senses of dramatic storytelling (above) did you observe in this production? Explain your answers by including details to support each sense you identify.
- Mr. McCall believes he has presented you with “life-defining moments of the African-American male” in this production. What does he mean by “life-defining” moments; what are those moments that he presented, and how do you think those moments are specific to the African-American male? Why would they not occur in the life of an African-American woman? How are these moments different from what might occur in another country to another people in the minority? And finally, why is important for all of us to know about these moments?
- Conflict and resolution are important concepts for drama and theatre. What conflicts did you notice in the play? How were the conflicts resolved?
- When and where do you think this play happens? What clues did you use to come up with your answer(s)?
- Would you define this play as “entertaining.” Why? Or why not?
- How did you have to use your imagination while watching this play?
- How would you go about creating your own play? What would you need to do first? What next? etc? Who would you work with? Why?

Finally: If you are looking for a writing assignment we love getting letters from students. Especially those that answer some of these questions.